What We Heard
Emergency Management in Canada's Agriculture Sector

A Report on Stakeholder Consultations

Federal, Provincial and Territorial
Emergency Management Framework Task Team

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What We Heard: Emergency Management in Canada's Agriculture Sector - A Report on Stakeholder Consultations
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INTRODUCTION

Canada's agricultural operating environment is rapidly evolving, and the factors that can lead to emergencies are increasingly complex and diverse. As a result, emergency events are growing in both number and impact, with the potential for significant implications that go beyond economic concerns.

Federal, provincial and territorial (FPT) governments are committed to protecting Canada's agricultural resources, and, given the changing operating environment, to improving the current approach across the emergency management continuum – from prevention, mitigation and preparedness, to response and recovery.

In pursuit of this, the *Emergency Management Framework for Agriculture in Canada* (the Framework) was developed to set the stage for change. This Framework aims to recognize the current realities faced by the agriculture sector, and proposes a stronger, more collaborative approach to emergency management.

As emergency management is most effective when it reflects the combined thinking of governments and stakeholders, a comprehensive consultation process was held in early 2016, targeting representatives from across the agriculture sector.

Stakeholder engagement was enthusiastic, with participants from across the country offering valuable insights. Consultations validated the Framework as providing the appropriate strategic direction going forward, with many stakeholders highlighting their strong desire to make this a reality, and providing feedback and ideas for doing so.

The comments received will be used to inform revisions to the Framework, particularly in further developing areas of action, and will also be used to inform the implementation of this initiative.

THE EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK FOR AGRICULTURE IN CANADA

The *Emergency Management Framework for Agriculture in Canada* is intended as the foundation from which national and forward-thinking objectives for effective and integrated activities will be established, thereby improving the country's collective approach to emergency management in agriculture. The Framework articulates a common vision and guiding principles for emergency management in this sector, underpinned by three desired outcomes.

A draft Framework was used as the basis for consultations to raise awareness of the work being undertaken by FPT governments to improve emergency management for Canada's agriculture sector, and to gain stakeholder feedback on the document's proposed outcomes and strategies.

Overview of the Framework document used for consultation

Vision for Agriculture Emergency Management

Integrated and collaborative emergency management focused on prevention and mitigation and improving our ability to prepare, respond and recover – thereby promoting the resilience, sustainability and competitiveness of the agriculture sector

Guiding Principles

Respect authorities, roles and responsibilities; Effective collaboration; Clear and coordinated communications; A risk-based approach; A comprehensive approach; Continuous improvement; Enhance public trust

Desired Outcomes

Enhanced prevention and mitigation: Risks are prevented or mitigated through a culture of proactivity, responsible action, policies and programming

Collaborative action: Emergency management partners place collaboration at the forefront and maximize the use of each other's strengths, capacities and expertise for seamless, coordinated and sustainable emergency management activities

Building sector resilience: A sector that proactively addresses risk, adapts to changing conditions, and is able to withstand and recover from emergencies

CONSULTATION APPROACH

Consultations took place between January 28 and March 24, 2016. The approach was multifaceted (as further outlined below), and provided the opportunity for those across the country and agriculture sector to contribute.

Stakeholders were asked to review the Framework and comment on its proposed strategies, roles, and responsibilities in relation to their own needs and experiences. They were also encouraged to offer suggestions for improving emergency management in Canada's agriculture sector overall—for example, ideas related to support FPT governments could provide and current practices that might be better used.

Feedback was initially solicited through targeted emails, inviting approximately 350 stakeholders to participate in the consultation and to further distribute the request. Stakeholder feedback was collected through various means, including a survey that allowed stakeholders to review materials and submit comments online. Face-to-face meetings, presentations, and webinars also allowed a more interactive approach. Messaging focused on the importance of this initiative, and enabled stakeholders to pose questions, offer suggestions and share experiences.

A diverse audience was reached through these multiple avenues, including farmers and/or primary producers; national and regional industry associations and members; agriculture production specialists and professionals; veterinarians; emergency management organizations; as well as FPT and municipal governments; academia; and the public.

22 in-person meetings with 250+ attendees
49 online surveys completed
Consultations reached approximately 400 stakeholders, including over 80 industry associations
70+ webinar participants
19 letters received

WHAT WE HEARD

Overall, reception to the Framework was positive and its proposed strategies were well-received. There was general agreement on the need for an improved approach to emergency management, and of its benefit to the Canadian agriculture sector and beyond. Stakeholders recognized that the implications of emergency management activities are wide-reaching, and that efforts will only be truly effective through sustained commitment and collaboration across the continuum.

> *The agriculture sector faces more risk than almost any other industry... [Our organization] fully supports the need to formalize a national strategy for managing emergency situations within the Canadian agricultural sector.*
>
> *- Ontario industry association*

To achieve real change, stakeholders emphasized the importance of translating the Framework's strategic direction into concrete actions. It was also frequently mentioned that the sector is not starting from scratch. In many cases, effective systems and practices are already in place that could be built upon or better integrated to reduce duplication of effort. Many tangible success stories and experiences were brought forward that future implementation could draw from.

VISION AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Stakeholder feedback demonstrated strong support for the Framework's vision and reinforced the relevance of the guiding principles (summarized on page 3), particularly in terms of an integrated and comprehensive approach to emergency management. The majority of stakeholders agreed with the Framework's increased emphasis on prevention and mitigation, reiterating the importance of a risk-based approach and of collectively focusing efforts earlier in the spectrum of emergency management activities.

At the same time, however, it was often expressed that proactive planning and preparedness should receive more attention. Stakeholders encouraged collective planning and training exercises to strengthen Canada's collective readiness for potential emergency events while enabling overall continuous improvement.

> *Recognition of industry and government strengths and weaknesses and a willingness to work together greatly improved the ability to cope with the 2014-15 avian influenza outbreak in British Columbia. Further focus on collaboration will go a long way in a future outbreak.*
>
> *- British Columbia farmer/primary producer*

Improved collaboration and communication were also highlighted as critical activities, with industry emphasizing their desire to be

more actively involved as a key partner in all aspects of emergency management. Building and maintaining public trust, and establishing mechanisms to facilitate collaboration with clearly understood roles and responsibilities were also expressed as being fundamental to achieving success.

DESIRED OUTCOMES

Stakeholders identified both opportunities and challenges across the desired outcomes and proposed strategies for action. Many of the ideas brought forward address more than one area.

Enhanced Prevention and Mitigation

Those consulted supported an enhanced focus on prevention and mitigation. Many stressed that proactive efforts to prevent emergency events and mitigate impacts, where possible, achieve more favourable outcomes as compared to reactive response and recovery initiatives.

A **risk-based approach** to emergency management received much attention, largely in terms of strengthening preventative measures. Stakeholders highlighted that better recognition and evaluation of potential risks to the agriculture sector, including those that have not yet occurred in Canada, would help in both preventing emergencies, and enabling readiness to mitigate impacts where needed. Some of the examples brought forward to accomplish this were: improving import controls, surveillance systems and diagnostic capacities; ongoing intelligence gathering and analysis (including from an economic standpoint); and information sharing. It was also commonly expressed that a risk-based approach should not go so far as to potentially stifle the innovation or productivity of the sector.

> *It is critical to have enhanced prevention and mitigation within Canada's agri-food chain. At the core of this is improving the Canadian agriculture sector's ability to manage risk and recall within the supply chain, proactively identifying, detecting, and analyzing potential threats.*
>
> *- National industry organization*

Biosecurity was frequently mentioned as an important component of prevention and mitigation. Many stakeholders voiced the need to review existing protocols, establish a strategy based on consistent standards, and ensure adherence both at the farm level and border crossings. Promotion and training were also raised as considerations, recognizing that not all agriculture sectors are at the same level of readiness to adopt biosecurity measures.

Stakeholders raised the need for greater **outreach and education** to build awareness and emphasize the responsibility of all parties—for example, campaigns to help the general public understand its role within agriculture emergency management. Additionally, active partnerships with academia and research institutions were highlighted in terms of incorporating emergency management approaches into agricultural curricula, and undertaking research and development in support of prevention and mitigation efforts (for example, treatments for potential pests and diseases, and drought tolerant crop varieties).

Collaborative Action

The importance of collaboration within all aspects of emergency management was firmly supported by those consulted. It was also suggested that clear collaborative processes should include cost-sharing principles and account for differences in capacity in order to achieve success. Additionally, stakeholders frequently raised the need for having a flexible collaborative approach, by way of both formal and informal platforms that facilitate collaboration and communication, ranging from ongoing relationship-building, to addressing emerging challenges, establishing protocols for action, and discussing results.

> *In my experience, a collaborative approach is all that can work. The various partners have different parts of the required information, and different levels of leverage and trust with their sectors.*
>
> *- Nova Scotia veterinarian with industry organization*

There was general agreement that **roles and responsibilities** must be clearly established but sufficiently flexible, well-understood, and regularly practiced to ensure effectiveness both in times of response and outside of emergency events. All partners must be able to demonstrate capacities, carry out critical functions, and make timely decisions on the ground. It was also frequently mentioned that the role of municipalities and local authorities (for example, law enforcement and first responders) were largely absent from the draft Framework, and that they must be better recognized and integrated for the approach to be truly comprehensive.

Numerous stakeholders also referred to **proactive and ongoing engagement** as a critical component of effective collaboration. Recognizing that the implications of emergency management in agriculture go beyond the sector itself, stakeholders echoed the importance of ensuring regular engagement with other appropriate entities, including federal government departments, agencies, local authorities and academia. Recognizing the expertise of various stakeholders would only strengthen collective efforts, for instance, in validating best practices. It was frequently expressed that involving producers and associations from the outset would ensure that they see themselves in the approach and take ownership of their role.

> *Ensure that we maximize the interrelationships between concerned stakeholders through existing agencies or by creating the necessary space for these exchanges of information to occur.*
>
> *- Quebec veterinarian/ production specialist*

There was also a recognized need for **information-sharing** agreements, formalized processes and systems, which, while respecting privacy, allow for the integration and accessibility of data, knowledge and expertise in support of emergency management decision-making. Compiling and updating inventories related to capacities, available resources, and infrastructure, for example, was noted as a way to facilitate coherent action. Stakeholders mentioned that in many cases, there are existing efforts and best practices already in place that could be better communicated and shared with others for their use (for example, Environmental Farm Plans). This would also provide opportunities to improve current systems and identify areas where new collaborative practices would be of benefit.

Building Sector Resilience

> *Please keep it simple. Really have a plan before an event happens. Please be fair. If there is no plan, do not take six or more months deciding what to do. Our experience has not been very positive.*
>
> *- Manitoba farmer/ primary producer*

While there was strong support for enhanced prevention and mitigation activities, many of those consulted expressed that not all emergencies can be prevented, and that strengthening preventative efforts must not come at the expense of other emergency management activities. In particular, the need to ensure all partners are adequately prepared when events do occur was noted as critical. To best support the resilience of the sector, stakeholders flagged that emergency management initiatives must help foster a state of collective readiness and facilitate continuous improvement.

Capacity building was referred to often throughout the consultation process, with stakeholders highlighting the need for training, education and outreach, and the importance of emergency planning to better enable sector resilience. It was commonly heard that resources and long-term commitments are required to not only develop emergency action plans and related inventories, but also to ensure they are practiced and kept up to date.

To support greater capacity building, stakeholders felt that FPT governments should assume a facilitating role in **planning and preparedness** efforts. For example, it was commonly heard that FPT governments should lead training workshops to enable the sharing of expertise from all parties and assist with the development of emergency plans. As well, it was noted that existing scheduled events (for example, national industry meetings) could be leveraged and other opportunities should be regularly

sought to run preparedness exercises. Practicing the established protocols, roles and responsibilities would allow for the proactive identification of strengths and gaps, and contribute to more effective response.

> *We strongly encourage follow-through on the strategy to promote regular preparedness exercises. Sharing information and planning together will make emergency management more of a success than planning it in our silos.*
>
> *- Manitoba industry association*

IMPLEMENTATION

Through all consultative platforms, there was a strong interest in learning how the concepts within the Framework will be turned into action and, ultimately, change. Stakeholders emphasized the importance of bringing ideas down to a working level to be meaningful, and many questioned how the day-to-day realities of the sector would be impacted by the initiative. Stakeholders also expressed that, going forward, the Framework could better outline concrete areas of action in pursuing improvements to agriculture emergency management, and many proposed ideas and potential considerations for doing so. The challenges in actually implementing an initiative of this scope were also frequently acknowledged.

> *Right now, the [Framework] has too many theoretical elements. More important is the implementation of the theory. We need to put processes in place permanently.*
>
> *- Quebec industry association*

In this regard, **funding and resources** were identified as critical for realizing the Framework's desired outcomes. Stakeholders noted that funding support and cost-sharing plans must recognize the differing levels of capacity amongst all parties. Investing in human capital, research and programming was raised as an important need, particularly outside of actual emergency events, as a means to demonstrate real and ongoing commitment to emergency management overall. It was also noted that there is a need for greater investments in critical infrastructure such as response centres, laboratories, transportation, and water control, in order to ensure their availability and functionality when required.

Those engaged also noted that emergency management is most effective when measures are **consistently adopted**. Using incentives was often identified as a means of achieving this. Linking compliance or the adoption of established emergency practices (for example, biosecurity) to eligibility for compensation or programming support, or, conversely, charging penalties for non-compliance, were raised as examples. Stakeholders also expressed that regulations must be modern in their approach to allow for situation-specific actions and decisions. Minimizing strict requirements and processes would acknowledge that the sector is not at a unified level of capacity or readiness.

Those consulted noted the importance of effective **program design and performance measurement** for all emergency management activities as a means to ensure both successful implementation, and continuous improvement. For example, the ability to demonstrate effectiveness and returns on investment would strengthen the validity and uptake of the approach.

> *The Framework recognizes that emergency management is flexible and adaptive, and improves over time with lessons learned - this aligns with our experience and our needs going forward.*
>
> *- Alberta industry association*

In further pursuit of **continuous improvement**, stakeholders acknowledged the value of existing tools and programs in building sector resilience (for example, Business Risk Management [BRM]), and that efforts to increase awareness of their applicability within the sector should be made. They also highlighted the need for stronger engagement, both in terms of governments including industry in the development of such programming, and industry reporting back to governments on its use value. It was also raised that among all parties, emergency management policies and programs must be reviewed regularly to ensure their alignment with current and emerging needs, and to allow for the incorporation of new tools or practices.

NEXT STEPS

The results of these consultations are informing revisions to the final Framework document to ensure it resonates with the expectations of individuals across the country and agriculture sector. As stakeholders emphasized the importance of taking action, their feedback is also helping to identify priority areas for implementation to realize the Framework's desired outcomes.

Revisions to the Framework will include:

- Greater recognition of existing initiatives and the need to better share and build upon them.
- Strengthened emphasis on proactive planning and preparedness, particularly with regard to building sector resilience.
- Improved articulation of roles and responsibilities, particularly those of municipal governments, as well as better engagement with other federal government department (for example, health, transportation, border agencies) and sectors.
- Refined potential strategies that reflect activities and deliverables for the more immediate term.

The FPT Emergency Management Framework Task Team greatly appreciates the invaluable insights and suggestions brought forward through this engagement process. Thank you to all participants for your involvement in shaping the path forward for emergency management in Canada's agriculture sector.

We are happy to accept questions or feedback regarding this initiative by email, at: AGEM-GUAG@AGR.GC.CA

ANNEX: GLOSSARY OF DEFINITIONS[1]

Biosecurity
A set of practices used to minimize the transmission of pests, diseases and contaminants including their introduction (bioexclusion), spread within populations (biomanagement), and release (biocontainment)[2].

Critical Infrastructure
Refers to processes, systems, facilities, technologies, networks, assets and services essential to the health, safety, security or economic well-being of Canadians and the effective functioning of government. Critical infrastructure can be stand-alone or interconnected and interdependent within and across provinces, territories and national borders. Disruptions of critical infrastructure could result in catastrophic loss of life, adverse economic effects, and significant harm to public confidence.

Emergency
A present or imminent event that requires prompt coordination of actions concerning persons or property to protect the health, safety or welfare of people, or to limit damage to property or the environment.

Emergency Management
The management of emergencies concerning all-hazards, including all activities and risk management measures related to prevention and mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery.

Partner
Any individual, group, or organization that might be affected by, or perceive itself to be affected by an emergency.

Prevention
Actions taken to avoid the occurrence of negative consequences associated with a given threat; prevention activities may be included as part of mitigation.

Prevention/Mitigation
Actions taken to eliminate or reduce the impact of disasters in order to protect lives, property, the environment, and reduce economic disruption. Prevention/mitigation includes structural mitigative measures (for example, construction of floodways and dykes) and non-structural mitigative measures (for example, building codes, land-use

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[1] All definitions from "An Emergency Management Framework for Canada (Second Edition)" unless otherwise referenced: http://www.publicsafety.gc.ca/cnt/rsrcs/pblctns/mrgnc-mngmnt-frmwrk/index-eng.aspx

[2] Canadian Food Inspection Agency. 2015. Integrated Agency Inspection Model - Final Version February 11, 2015 Retrieved from: http://inspection.gc.ca/about-the-cfia/accountability/inspection-modernization/integrated-agency-inspection-model/eng/1439998189223/1439998242489#saf

planning, and insurance incentives). Prevention and mitigation may be considered independently or one may include the other.

Resilience
Resilience is the capacity of a system, community or society exposed to hazards to adapt to disturbances resulting from hazards by persevering, recuperating or changing to reach and maintain an acceptable level of functioning. Resilient capacity is built through a process of empowering citizens, responders, organizations, communities, governments, systems and society to share the responsibility to keep hazards from becoming disasters.

Risk
The combination of the likelihood and the consequence of a specified hazard being realized; refers to the vulnerability, proximity or exposure to hazards, which affects the likelihood of adverse impact.

Risk-based
The concept that sound emergency management decision-making will be based on an understanding and evaluation of hazards, risks and vulnerabilities.